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**ST. LOUIS MAN ARRESTED ON IMMIGRATION FRAUD CHARGES ALLEGING
HE LIED ABOUT HIS AFFILIATIONS WITH WEST AFRICAN REBEL GROUPS**

CHICAGO – A West African man was arrested today by ICE agents in St. Louis on federal charges filed in Chicago alleging that he lied about his involvement with rebel groups to gain entry to the United States as a refugee. The defendant, **Prince Solomon Knox**, a native of Sierra Leone, was admitted in 2004 to the United States through the U.S. refugee program to admit Liberians living in the Ivory Coast. He allegedly lied on immigration forms and in interviews with immigration officers about being a combatant with armed rebel groups that fought in parts of West Africa during much of the 1990s. The charges were announced by Patrick J. Fitzgerald, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois, and Elissa A. Brown, Special Agent-in-Charge of the Chicago Division of the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Department of Homeland Security.

Knox, 44, of St. Louis, was ordered held in federal custody pending further court proceedings when he appeared today before Magistrate Judge Thomas Mummert in U.S. District Court in St. Louis. He was charged with two counts of immigration fraud and two counts of making false statements to immigration officials in 2003 and 2006.

“Our country has a long tradition of offering refuge to victims of armed conflict, and it is particularly egregious when people abuse that opportunity by lying about their pasts,” Mr. Fitzgerald said.

According to a federal grand jury indictment that was unsealed following his arrest, Knox was admitted to the United States as a refugee and entered at Chicago’s O’Hare International Airport on April 14, 2004. In applying for admission, Knox allegedly failed to disclose his affiliations with the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), a rebel army comprised mainly of Sierra Leoneans that fought a failed insurrection in Sierra Leone from about 1991 to 2002; the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), an armed rebel group closely aligned with the RUF; and the Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL), a separate rebel faction of the NPFL.

On Dec. 9, 2003, in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, Knox completed a refugee application that failed to disclose his affiliations with the RUF, NPFL and INPFL, when he knew that he was affiliated with those organizations, which engaged in civilian massacres, mutilations, recruitment of child soldiers and other human rights violations. During an interview with a U.S. immigration officer, Knox allegedly falsely stated under oath that he had performed no past military service; had not been a member in armed groups; had provided no aid to armed groups; had not been a member of a terrorist organization or member of a group that endorsed terrorist activity; and had never held a weapon. He also repeated that he had never held a weapon in an interview with an ICE agent on March 26, 2006, the indictment alleges.

The government is being represented by Assistant U.S. Attorney Michelle Nasser Weiss, with the assistance of the U.S. Attorney’s Office in St. Louis.

If convicted, immigration fraud carries a maximum penalty of 25 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine, and making false statements carries a maximum penalty of 5 years in prison and

\$250,000 fine on each count. Note, however, that the Court, would determine the appropriate sentence to be imposed.

The public is reminded that an indictment contains only charges and is not evidence of guilt. The defendant is presumed innocent and is entitled to a fair trial at which the government has the burden of proving guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

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